

J.D. Currie Youth Camp, Inc.

The J.D. Currie Youth Camp, located on the North shore of Lacamas Lake, was started about 1943. For some years, local Scout and other youth leaders had felt the need of a camp site close enough that it could be used regularly by community youth groups. The closest Boy Scout camps were Camp Merriwether on the Oregon coast, Camp Millard near Estacada, Oregon and Wind River. It soon became apparent to those promoting it that such a camp should be more than a "scout" camp - it should be available to all the youth in the community. The name "J.D. Currie Youth Camp" was selected to honor the Camas attorney who had conducted almost single-handed an outdoor program for young boys called "Boy Rangers". Selection was made by a contest conducted among Boy Scout units. Both Lee Fisher and Bud Belz suggested the winning name and were awarded \$25. bonds.

The sponsoring group was incorporated as a non-profit corporation on March 15, 1946. The site of the camp was leased from Crown Zellerbach Corporation for \$1.00 per year and a start was made on improvements. Materials were donated by various individuals and by the mill.

Most of the material for the lodge and kitchen was donated by the mill including brick for a large fireplace and outside cooking facilities. The kitchen was also donated by the Crown Zellerbach Corporation and moved out to the location intact. It was a construction office on the mill grounds when contractors were working there. Crown Zellerbach also donated the cable for fences, several truck loads of wood and old lumber for fuel, a large cedar log which was hauled out for shingles to cover the lodge and kitchen.

There is a large bell hanging in a tower above the lodge which has a history. During World War II, Grand Island, Nebraska, which is said to be the most central town of the United States, became the location of a large munitions plant. In clearing 20 square miles of Nebraska prairie for a huge installations, soldiers found a little country school house, probably a century old, deserted for years but still in good condition. A Mr. Meyer Avedovech, general manager of the operation, having an appreciation for early history, saved the building and utilized it as a work shop. Workmen didn't know what to do with the bell which hung in the belfry, but suddenly they had a great idea. They polished it until it shone. They made a platform on wheels, mounted the bell and presented it to their general manager as a token of their esteem.

Years later, the war ended, Mr. Avedovech, in private life an executive of Quaker Oats Co., returned to Chicago where he put the bell in storage. In 1947, he traveled to Portland to build a Quaker Oats plant on Swan Island and stopped in Camas to visit an old friend and neighbor of early Minneapolis days, J.D. Currie. Mr. Currie, being very proud of the camp named in his honor, took his friend to see the campsite. Mr. Avedovech remembered the old school bell still in storage and ordered it shipped from Chicago to Camp Currie where it again calls boys and girls together as it did a hundred years ago on the prairies of Nebraska. Because of the vandalism problem and to gain better control of